What is Right?

June 9, 1935

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What is Right?

Dt. 6:18 Thou shalt do that which is right & good.

(Century Dictionary)

Intro. First, dictionary definitions.

right – In conformity with the moral law; permitted by the principle which ought to regulate conduct; in accordance with truth, justice, duty, or the will of God; ethically good; equitable; just.

good – Possessing or characterized by moral excellence; free from evil or wickedness; virtuous; pure;

just – lawful, rightful, true, proper

justice – the quality of being just.
Practical conformity to the laws and principles of right dealing.
Honesty, rectitude, uprightness
The moral principle which determines a just conduct.

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Every honest thinking man will agree that we ought to do that which is right and good and just. But in our age of moral & intellectual confusion there is no agreement as to ~~just~~ what is right + good + just. As the writer of Proverbs puts it – "Even a fool is right in his own eyes."

I am not here to tell you what is right. I shall attempt, however, to help you to determine what is right for you in every situation; that is, if you really and honestly desire to find out.

I. In the first place there are certain dangers to be avoided.

1. Everybody is doing it, therefore it must be right.

If everybody cheats in an examination; does that make cheating right?

If everybody gambles in stocks + everyone plays the slot machines or indulges in games of chance does that justify gambling?

If everybody gets drunk, does that make drunkenness a right conduct?

If every man flirts with other men's wives or if every woman flirts with other women's husbands, does that justify flirting?

2. But as a fact everybody is not doing it. Because the crowd you go with may be doing any of these things, it does not

3/ follow that everybody is doing them.

In summer during vacation – "Everybody is out of town."

that which is the fad or the fashion is not necessarily right

3. Everybody is selfish – seeking his own ends – therefore selfishness is natural & right.

Exceptions –

Wilberforce, Lord Shaftesbury, Abraham Lincoln, Louis Pasteur, Robert Owen, Jacob Riis, Jane Adams – many others, not to mention Jesus himself.

thousands of unselfish parents, school teachers, doctors & nurses.

II. The sense of right may be cultivated.

No man born with a fully developed sense of right, any more than he is born with a fully developed sense of beauty or of truth.

1. First, learn to think honestly.

No man is dishonest towards another without first being dishonest with himself.

We used to lie to ourselves, but today we rationalize which sounds as tho we were making progress until we examined ourselves psychologically only to discover that we ignore our motives and standards and justify our conduct however bad that conduct may be.

4) 2. The need to test conventional laws and standards:

1. E – the marriage vow – "Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor & keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?"

Many believe this to be this a harsh imposition upon human nature & an unnatural restraint.

Yet the tragic result of the opposite view is seen on the front page of every newspaper!

There is good reason to suppose that the Xn conception of marriage represents a discovery, which, after centuries of being tried, makes for the happiness, the emotional stability & the spiritual development of the race.

You can test the 10 commandments in the same way.

3. Is what I am proposing to do in the line of my own fullest & finest development?

We are more than earthly. We are more than animals. There is a divinity within us which ought to shape our ends.

4. Is what I am proposing to do in line with the highest welfare of all others concerned?

Whatever destroys or injures human life is wrong. It is to be given up, refused, & resisted.

5/ Conclusion – Is what I am proposing to do in harmony with the will of God?

Let the Man, Jesus, on the Cross, dying that the world might have life more abundantly, be your guide in all matters of conduct.

Even tho we live in a world of confusion, if we look straight at the Cross of Christ, if we will study the teachings of the Bible, if we will learn the lessons of history, if we will study the development of man from savagery to civilization, if we will heed the vision of our future as God gives it to us in Jesus Christ, then ~~who~~ we shall know what is right & good & just in every situation as it may arise.